

FORCE MANAGEMENT  
POLICYOFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RTHROUGH: Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) *Chau*FROM: Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy)  
Prepared by: VADM Patricia A. Tracey, OASD(FMP)(MPP), 697-4416  
Date Prepared: May 4, 2000 *pat44*

SUBJECT: Pre-Accession Drug and Alcohol Testing – ACTION MEMORANDUM

PURPOSE: To establish a new policy to shorten the alcohol and marijuana (THC) pre-accession retest period from 180 days to 45 days.

DISCUSSION: Current DoD policy requires applicants for military service who, on their initial test, test positive for alcohol or THC to wait 180 days before retesting and reprocessing for entrance into military service (Tab B). Army requests the retest period be adjusted to 45 days. Army believes that many of these individuals would comply with DoD zero tolerance policy, but would find other alternatives in the current 6-month waiting period.

The current waiting period was set by Health Affairs and Force Management Policy in 1988. Since 1988, we have tightened the standard for allowable levels of THC and improved the technology for testing. However, we have never reconsidered the retesting period in light of the tougher standard and improved technology.

In 1988, DoD used 100 nanograms to screen and 50 nanograms to confirm a positive THC level. Today, the allowable measurement is 50 nanograms and 15 nanograms to confirm THC presence.

In both physical examination and drug testing procedures, DoD attempts to identify those applicants who are dependent upon or chronic users of THC. Waiting 180 days from the initial test does not protect against erroneous qualification of such applicants. Applicants who stop THC usage as little as 30 days prior to retesting will generally obtain a negative drug result. Under current policy, an individual who fails the drug test once could continue THC usage for as much as four and a half to five months prior to processing again and show up negative on the retest. By contrast, an established lifestyle or habit of THC usage is more likely to result in a positive retest after the proposed shorter retest period.

The Services will continue to perform random drug testing on their in service members to identify all illegal drug use. Additionally, all applicants must be drug and alcohol free prior to entry on active or Reserve duty, as required by law. The recommended change will better align drug-testing policy with more appropriate timeframes determining chronic or habitual use.




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COORDINATION: FMP next under  
ACTING GC modified as per attachment  
ASD(HA) see attached  
ASD(LA) see attached  
Services-unanimously reported concurrence with this proposal at the February 22,  
2000 meeting of the Joint Accession Group.

RECOMMENDATION: That you sign the policy memorandum at Tab A

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DECISION:

  
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MAY 11 2000  
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Other: